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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASTANA 000521

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, ISN/WMDT, AND ISN/ECC

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [KNNP](#) [CH](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR SMUGGLING  
EXERCISE HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

REF: STATE 05431

Classified By: Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland, 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The State Department's Preventing Nuclear Smuggling Program conducted a table-top nuclear smuggling exercise in Astana February 24-25. Almost 20 Kazakhshtani officials from eight government agencies attended the event. Kazakhstan is currently finalizing a national nuclear smuggling response plan, and the participants thanked the U.S. government for its assistance in enhancing Kazakhstan,s capabilities. However, the Kazakhstanis admitted that many of their agencies lack the resources to effectively handle nuclear and radiological materials. Securing orphan sources within Kazakhstan,s territory poses a particularly serious challenge. Moreover, the Kazakhstani government is focused on keeping nuclear and radiological materials from entering Kazakhstan, rather than on domestic seizures and investigations. The Committee for National Security (KNB) rejected the U.S. model of simultaneous national and local responses, and expressed little interest in expanding cooperation in prosecution and nuclear forensics. Post recommends engaging working-level contacts on the importance of countering nuclear smuggling and pursuing short-term training opportunities for an expanded spectrum of recipients, to be followed next year by another table-top exercise. END SUMMARY.

EXERCISE EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

12. (SBU) On February 24-25, the State Department's Preventing Nuclear Smuggling Program conducted a table-top nuclear smuggling exercise in Astana. Almost 20 Kazakhstani officials from eight government agencies, including the Committee for National Security (KNB), Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (MEMR), Kazakhstan Atomic Energy Committee (KAEC), Ministry of the Interior (MVD), Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES), Kazakhstan Customs Control Committee (KCCC), the Ministry of Health (MOH), and Committee of State Sanitary and Epidemiological Control (SEC) attended. The Kazakhstani participants actively described the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of their agencies.

#### IT TAKES THE UNITED STATES TO BRING KAZAKHSTANIS TOGETHER

13. (C) The atmosphere of the event was very positive and constructive. The Kazakhstanis said they had taken steps to strengthen their ability to prevent nuclear smuggling, including cataloging Kazakhstani radioactive sources, implementing IAEA guidelines, and establishing inter-agency protocols for dealing with nuclear smuggling. Various agencies expressed appreciation for U.S. training programs, technical assistance, and equipment provided through EXBS, DOE, and the joint DOD/FBI International Counter-proliferation Program (ICP). KAEC's representatives were particularly active participants and said they hoped to incorporate lessons from the exercise into their national nuclear smuggling response plan, which KAEC intends to present to the Kazakhstani government for review and approval within the next several months. The senior KAEC representative, Tleu Dairbekov, thanked the U.S. government "for bringing us together )- as we could not have done this ourselves."

#### KNB UNWILLING TO SHARE INFORMATION

14. (C) The KNB officials attending the workshop acknowledged that some of their KNB colleagues had received training through the ICP Program, but they had not participated themselves. (COMMENT: The KNB officials attending the exercise appeared to be relatively junior within their organizations. END COMMENT.) Although the KNB representatives sometimes appeared uncomfortable with the frank comments of Kazakhstani representatives from other

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agencies, they intervened only when discussions turned to law enforcement issues, asserting "we would take care of that." The KNB representatives did not provide any information on nuclear forensics techniques or information-sharing with other governments. The most active KNB participant, Yerbol Talapov, privately complained to PolOff that, "sometimes other agencies resent us, but we do operate according to the laws of Kazakhstan and the guidelines of our organization."

#### OTHER AGENCIES DISCUSS RESOURCE AND FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

15. (C) Some Kazakhstani participants expressed frustration when describing the difficulties their organizations face in dealing with radioactive and nuclear material, especially orphan sources. Vyacheslav Klingenberg, a medical doctor and Chief of the Radiological Laboratory for the Astana Center of Sanitary-Epidemiological Examination, said he has worked for 30 years in radiation safety. He called his invitation to the exercise "a fortunate accident," since he had never participated in such an event before. Klingenberg gave a short presentation using photos of nuclear and radiological materials that his team had been called in to secure. He said that although most local SEC officials have no protective gear and no radiation pagers, they are often called in to investigate canisters with nuclear symbols that may contain hazardous substances. Klingenberg and MVD representative Targyn Smagulov were particularly interested in the radiation pagers that U.S. local police carry. The MOH's Zauze Akhmetova, a medical doctor who previously worked in the Karaganda region, said that Soviet orphan source materials are frequently found throughout Kazakhstan's territory, but few agencies possess the funding and equipment to dispose of them properly.

16. (C) Participants raised concerns about poor public awareness and lack of nuclear and radiological specialists. Klingenberg maintained that many people confuse the nuclear symbol with the Mitsubishi logo. Several participants explained that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan tried to create special academic programs and institutions to train nuclear scientists, but such efforts failed. (COMMENT: PolOff has not met any nuclear specialists under 30 years old, and all of PolOff's

interlocutors from MEMR, KAEC, the National Nuclear Center, SEC and Kazatomprom were trained under the Soviet system. The absence of a new generation of specialists is of particular concern in a country in which Soviet-era orphan sources of radiation are prevalent. END COMMENT.)

PRIORITY NUMBER ONE: PREVENT SMUGGLING INTO KAZAKHSTAN

17. (C) Some Kazakhstani participants alleged that China has attempted to ship radioactive and nuclear waste to Kazakhstan, and indicated that preventing such shipments is a top priority for them. However, they expressed doubt that Kazakhstan itself would be the target of a nuclear terrorist incident. As KAEC's Tleu Dairbekov put it, "I am not aware of any threats of nuclear terrorism directed against Kazakhstan." The Kazakhstanis acknowledged, however, the need for the country to be ready to counter nuclear terrorism directed at foreigners in Kazakhstan, especially during such events as the upcoming 2011 Asian Winter Games in Kazakhstan.

The Kazakhstanis said that if Customs uncovers an attempt to smuggle nuclear materials into Kazakhstan, they would simply send the shipment back, rather than taking steps to secure the materials and investigate the incident. Representatives of most of the Kazakhstani agencies said that they would be criminally liable if they allowed nuclear or radiological materials into Kazakhstan, and claimed they do not have enough resources to secure and store such hazardous material.

KNB REJECTS U.S. MODEL OF EARLY NATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

18. (C) The KNB representatives told the U.S. participants

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that in all matters relating to the national security and law enforcement aspects of nuclear smuggling, the KNB is the lead agency, and their organization "prefers to handle all incidents at the local level" by convening a regional taskforce, nominally led by a deputy akim (governor). Representatives from the KNB declined to comment on which state agencies would participate in a taskforce and how responsibilities would be divided. When KAEC's Dairbekov asked detailed questions about how the U.S. handles national and local coordination, the KNB cut off the discussion. The KNB also refused to discuss when they would refer incidents to central authorities or other agencies for help.

19. (C) Although we had invited the Procurator General's Office to participate in the event, they did not send a representative. Moreover, although the Kazakhstani participants had specifically requested FBI participation and directed a number of detailed questions towards FBI specialists during the exercise, the Kazakhstani representatives admitted they do not prosecute individuals that they cannot explicitly link to smuggling. The driver of a truck bringing nuclear or radioactive materials into Kazakhstan, for example, would not necessarily be prosecuted; the first target of investigation would be the shipping company.

110. (C) COMMENT: Kazakhstan's overall national system for preventing nuclear smuggling remains one of the most advanced in the region. The Kazakhstani participants in the exercise expressed hope that they would receive more training from U.S. experts and have the U.S. conduct similar events in Kazakhstan again in the future. Post strongly encourages supporting these requests with a three part-strategy. First, U.S. specialists should enhance engagement with their Kazakhstani counterparts. Specific goals could include expanding Kazakhstani participation in the International Technical Working Group, promoting the ICP program, and providing training opportunities for MOH, MES, MVD, and Customs. Second, Post suggests conducting a second table-top exercise in 2010 to test the Kazakhstan's national nuclear smuggling response plan -) which should have been approved by then -- and strengthen the interagency relationships created through the February 2009 exercise. Post also

recommends greater engagement with the Kazakhstani government on the importance of preventing and investigating nuclear smuggling.

¶11. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: If a second table-top exercise is successful, Kazakhstan could hold a third exercise with real materials. Post also recommends diversifying the target audiences of its programs, to include not only the KNB, the Ministry of Defense, MVD, and Customs, but also a full range of Kazakhstani partners, including MES, MOH, and KAEC. In the long-run Kazakhstan itself may be willing to use the expertise it acquires to provide much needed assistance to other Central Asian states, which would also further promote its image as a leader in non-proliferation. END COMMENT.  
HOAGLAND